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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000246

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANBAR CANDIDATES PREDICT NEW PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
MAKEUP

REF: BAGHDAD 198

Classified By: ADCM Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a series of discussions with poloffs on the upcoming Anbar Provincial Council (PC) elections, Anbari candidates predicted that the Awakening Conference of Iraq (MSI, the "Sahwa"), the Iraqi Islamic Party, the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, the National Movement for Reform and Development, and the Al Anbar Salvation Council parties would secure the most seats in the new PC. Candidates were initially reluctant to forecast winning parties or new council coalitions. Excepting our IIP interlocutor and an independent candidate, all agreed that IIP would retain a presence on but would no longer dominate the new PC, and that incumbent Governor Ma'amoun would not return as governor in Anbar. An election result of five to six parties splitting the majority of seats in the Anbar PC could signal the start of a new era of cooperation on the PC, or result in deadlock.
END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Poloffs held a series of discussions with candidates running in the Anbar PC elections January 18, and January 24-26. Sheikh Hamid Al Heiss (Al Anbar Salvation Council party, Iraqi Tribal Front coalition), traveled to Baghdad to speak with us. Sheikh Daher Hameed Awad Sulayman (Conference of the Awakening of Iraq party (MSI, the "Sahwa"), Anbar coalition), Khamis Abtan (Deputy Anbar PC Chair, representing Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), running with Coalition of Intellectuals and Tribes for Development party (CITD)), Dr. Jassim Al Halboosi, (Iraqi National Dialogue Front party (Dialogue), Iraqi National Project Alliance coalition), Mohammed Fatha and Nehal Ahmad Salih (National Movement for Reform and Development party (NMRD), no coalition), Hajji Hamid Al Uwaid (independent candidate) all traveled to Camp Ramadi. IIP, MSI, NMRD, Dialogue, and NISF candidates, as well as individual independent candidate Hajji Hamid Al Uwaid, were initially reluctant to discuss other parties' members or potential factions that might form on the new PC. Our contacts claimed that they could work equally well with any other members of the council. Eventually however, they began to make cautious guesses and hint at preferences.

IIP

13. (U) Khamis Abtan (IIP) did not speculate on how other parties would perform in the election, but did feel that voters would recognize individual candidates' names over party names. This is particularly important for Khamis, since although an IIP loyalist, he is actually listed as a tribal candidate within the Coalition of Intellectuals and Tribes for Development (CITD) list (reftel). NOTE: Many believe that IIP formed a coalition with a tribal party in order to attract tribal voters who have re-engaged in the electoral process, and to deflect negative associations with IIP as the incumbent party. END NOTE).

14. (C) Mohammed Fatha (NMRD) is a candidate representing Jamal Karbuli's party in Anbar. Initially he and Nehal Ahmad Salih, NMRD's party director in Anbar, both declined to speculate about what factions might form on the new PC, saying that NMRD wanted to work as "integrators, rather than as a foe to others, on the council." Mohammed did however declare that his party wanted to ally with MSI on the new PC, since NMRD felt closest to MSI/the Sahwa. Mohammed was also careful to say that "we are not disconnected with IIP either," presumably leaving open the option to work with IIP. Qeither," presumably leaving open the option to work with IIP. While not criticizing current Governor Ma'amoun outright, Mohammed did say "the people have told us that Governor Ma'amoun's luck is low in these elections."

NATIONAL DIALOGUE FRONT

15. (C) Dr. Jassim Al Halboosi (Dialogue--led nationally by Saleh Al Mutlaq), a Geophysics Professor at Baghdad University, positions himself as a technocrat and an intellectual. Of all of our interlocutors, he was the most frank in his assessment of who might sit in the new Anbar PC, listing Dialogue, IIP, MSI, NMRD, and NISF as most likely to win seats. He did not think Khalaf Al Uyyan's Future National Assembly would win any seats. On Governor Ma'amoun, Dr. Jassim respected him for having endured "very hard years" while in office, but did not think that Ma'amoun would return as governor.

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16. (C) Dr. Jassim allowed that IIP would win five to seven seats, but claimed that Anbaris had "learned a lesson from the (current) IIP-led provincial council," and would not allow the party to retain its dominance of the council. He anticipated that should six or seven parties win seats in the new 29 seat PC, its members would have to cooperate closely to accomplish anything. In general, he outlined a preference to work with intellectuals and technocrats, saying that "it is hard to work with sheikhs." He hopes that "the tribes choose to stay in their parlors, and the Imams to choose to stay in their mosques," and that both "send their intellectuals to the council." (NOTE: Dr. Jassim is referring to the IIP and MSI forming coalitions with tribal and intellectual/technocratic parties respectively, in order to broaden their appeal to Anbari voters (reftel). END NOTE).

MSI

17. (C) Sheikh Daher Hameed Awad Sulayman, representing the Sahwa/MSI, would not be drawn into making specific forecasts on the results of the elections or potential factions in the new PC. However, he stated that MSI would work with any PC member "who works in the interest of the people of Anbar--including IIP."

NATIONAL IRAQI SALVATION FRONT

18. (C) Sheikh Hamid Al Heiss of (Al Anbar Salvation Council) thought IIP would win three to four seats. Sheikh Hamid held MSI in low regard however, saying that since the Sahwa (MSI) "do not have degrees," i.e., are not well-educated, they would ultimately attract fewer voters despite their popularity. (NOTE: Sheikh Hamid, a founding member of the Sahwa, split from MSI/Sahwa over leadership and directional differences. END NOTE).

HAJJI HAMID AL UWAID

¶9. (C) Hajji Hamid Al Uwaid is a Ramadi businessman involved in construction and transportation enterprises. He believed that Ma'amoun "is finished" as governor in Anbar. He predicted that many Anbaris would vote for MSI and other tribal lists, but proclaimed that ultimately IIP "will tame other parties" and return to the new PC in a position of strength.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Our interlocutors' frequently careful mention of IIP in the discussions of possible working partners on the new PC suggests that all expect IIP to retain a significant presence on the new PC. IIP's predicted return to the council, despite much discontent with its performance in the current PC, demonstrates the party's tenacity and organization, and the temporary and unstable nature of alliances among Anbar's Sunni Arab tribes that would challenge IIP.

¶11. (C) The basis for our contacts' forecasts is uncertain. But should their predictions be accurate, Anbar's PC will feature five to six parties taking the lion's share of its 29 seats. Such a multiplicity of actors could lead to a new era of cooperation in Anbari politics, or result in eventual deadlock, with lines drawn over individual interests. END
COMMENT.

CROCKER